

Now Accepting Applications for NIH K12 Career Development Support for Women's Health Research

The UNC School of Medicine was recently awarded two institutional career development awards (K12 mechanism) from the U.S. National Institutes of Health, both focused on women's health. We are currently requesting applications for up to five positions in total, starting as early as January 2026.

The **Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health** (BIRCWH, pronounced "birch") is a mentored career development program designed to connect junior faculty, known as BIRCWH Scholars, to senior faculty with shared interest in women's health and sex differences research. The mission of the UNC BIRCWH Program is to mentor and train early career investigators to become independent interdisciplinary translational science researchers who study high priority areas in women's health, explore biological sex influences on health and disease, and incorporate research strategies to diminish health disparities for women across the lifespan. Core NIH research priority areas aligning with strengths at UNC include maternal health, metabolic disorders, behavioral health, infectious disease, and cancer. Applicants to the BIRCWH program will be doctorate (e.g., MD or PhD) degree holding women's health researchers recruited from any school in UNC or being recruited to UNC. These junior faculty should have an academic rank no higher than assistant professor. Post-doctoral fellows and instructor-level faculty are eligible to apply. Applicants must be US citizens or permanent residents.

The **Women's Reproductive Health Research Program** (WRHR, pronounced "were-her") is a mentored career development program for trained obstetrician-gynecologists (Ob-Gyns) working in the field. Entering our third cycle, the WRHR Program seeks to: (1) catalyze the early career development of promising Ob-Gyn clinician investigators in women's reproductive health research through mentorship, collaboration, and tailored skills building; (2) enhance engagement of Ob-Gyn researchers in multidisciplinary and translational team-based science within and outside of the UNC Department of Ob-Gyn; and (3) advance women's reproductive health through the design, conduct, and dissemination of cutting-edge research, in areas aligned with NIH scientific priorities. Scientific areas can span the reproductive life course for women. To be eligible, candidates must have completed their medical degree, finished Ob-Gyn specialty training, and be a US citizen or permanent resident. At this time, the WRHR Program is recruiting assistant professors or senior fellows being recruited for a new faculty position in the UNC Department of Ob-Gyn.

Both programs require at least 75% dedicated time to research. Up to \$100,000 per year is available for salary support (including benefits); depending on the individual's base compensation, departmental co-funding may be required. Scholars are appointed a minimum of two years with the possibility of renewal for additional years. Funds are available to support the scholars in their research and professional development: \$25,000 per year for WRHR and \$40,000 per year for BIRCWH. This includes travel to annual meetings for the different initiatives.

We are looking to fill positions between January to June 2026, though exact start dates may be negotiated. At this time, we are only recruiting candidates already at UNC.

Below, we provide instructions for the application process. We are using a unified application for both programs; your single submission means that you will be considered for both programs (assuming eligibility criteria are met). Scholars are only eligible to receive an award from a single program. We ask that individuals considering these opportunities complete a short [statement of intent](#) by **September 26, 2025**. This information will facilitate planning for the application peer review. It also allows program managers to contact prospective applicants in case of any changes to the materials or the deadlines. This step is not required or binding.

The **full application is due on October 17, 2025**. The portal for the full application can be found [here](#); instructions for the different sections are provided in the pages that follow. All applicants will be notified of their status by early December 2025.

Please direct any questions about the application materials or submission portal to cwhr@unc.edu.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

1. General format:

- Font size should be 11 or larger (Arial, Georgia, Helvetica, or Palatino Linotype) with half-inch margins. Consistent with NIH guidelines, font size should also be legible in tables/figures.
- Adhere to the page or word limits for each section.
- The application includes the following sections. These can be completed directly into the application portal or uploaded as a separate document.
 - Project description, including abstract (up to 250 words)
 - Applicant biosketch
 - Application narrative, sections A-B below
 - Mentor information
 - Letters of support
- Applicants are required to propose a distinct research project to be completed during the funding period. This project is expected to generate most or all of the preliminary data needed for an individual K- or R-equivalent grant submission by the end of the second year of support.

2. Project description:

- All candidates are asked to complete basic information about their application, including:
 - Project title
 - Abstract (up to 250 words) – include research and professional development goals

3. Applicant information:

- Candidate information – name, degrees, current position, division, department, school, earliest available start date
- A recent biosketch should be uploaded into the application portal. Use updated format dated September 2024 <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>

4. Application narrative:

A. Candidate background and career goals (maximum 2 pages)

This should include the following sections: (1) background and research training, (2) career goals and objectives, and (3) career development and training plan. Clearly identify your training goals during the K12 program and explain how each goal aligns with your current research project and long-term career objectives. Be specific in describing how the proposed training activities will directly support your transition to becoming an independent researcher. Where appropriate, including expected timelines and completion dates for specific activities. This will be uploaded into the application portal.

B. Proposed research project (maximum 5 pages total)

This project serves as the scholar's primary research effort. It is expected to generate most or all of the preliminary data needed for an individual K- or R- equivalent grant submission by the end of the second year of support. This plan should address key components such as the significance, innovation, and approach of the proposed project. Organize this section according to the following subsections:

- I. Specific Aims (maximum 1 page)
- II. Research Strategy (maximum 4 pages):
 - Significance: Describe the importance of the problem, how it will advance the field, and the potential impact of your research.
 - Innovation: Explain how your research challenges existing paradigms or develops novel technologies or approaches.
 - Approach: Detail the experiments you will conduct to achieve each aim organized around those aims. Include your rationale for the hypothesis, expected outcomes, and alternative approaches.

C. Additional resources (if applicable)

If the candidate has additional resources to complete the study, this should be noted in this section. This includes ongoing research funding from the applicant or their mentors. It may include direct or indirect collaborations to support the proposed project.

5. Mentors:

Candidates can include up to three mentors as part of this application. However, one must be designated as the primary mentor. The primary mentor is directly accountable for scholar progress and should help the scholar manage the broader team. For each mentor, we will ask for the following information:

- I. Mentor information, including position and past mentor training
- II. Recent NIH Biosketch, uploaded directly into the application portal
- III. Information about mentoring experience (see bulleted list below)

The primary mentor must have had mentor training prior to the Scholar's appointment to the grant. If a proposed mentor has not received mentor training for biomedical researchers by the time of the application, they should ideally complete it prior to the scholar's formal appointment. **Note:** For the WRHR Program, the primary mentor should be faculty from the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. For those eligible and interested in the BIRCWH Program, at least two mentors should be at UNC.

All mentors are also asked to provide the following information about prior mentees over the past 10 years. Applicants are instructed to obtain this data from their proposed mentors and enter it directly into the application portal.

- Pre-doctorates in training
- Pre-doctorates graduated
- Among those graduated, pre-doctorates continued in research or related careers
- Post-doctorates in training
- Post-doctorates graduated
- Among those graduated, post-doctorates continued in research or related careers

6. Letters of support (PDFs, no hard copy is required):

We require two letters of support for each applicant:

- I. Letter of institutional support (department chair or division chief) – should include commitment of 75% effort to the K12 program and salary co-funding, if needed
- II. Letter from primary mentor

In addition, an applicant can submit up to two additional letters, though these are optional. These letters can be from other mentors and collaborators who can speak to the candidate's potential to become an independent investigator.

We understand that letters come at different times and writers may prefer to send a letter directly to us. If this is the case, please choose this option in the application portal and ask them to email the letter to cwhr@unc.edu prior to the application deadline (Oct. 17).